Copyright © 2001 International Socialist Organization. Reach us at P.O. Box 16085, Chicago, IL 60616, at 773-665-7337 or on the Web at www.internationalsocialist.org.

Pamphlet designed and typeset by Alan Maass. Cover demonstration photo by Lee Sustar. Printed in the United States of America.

Beat Back Bush / Articles from *Socialist Worker* and the *International Socialist Review*, with an interview with Howard Zinn

The International Socialist Organization is linked to an international grouping of socialist organizations:

AUSTRALIA International Socialist Organisation
P.O. Box A338, Sydney South

BRITAIN Socialist Workers Party, P.O. Box 82, London E3

CANADA International Socialists
P.O. Box 339, Station E, Toronto, Ontario M6H 4E3

CYPRUS Ergatiki Demokratia, P.O. Box 7280, Nicosia

DENMARK Internationale Socialister, P.O. Box 5113, 8100 Aarhus C

GERMANY Linksruck, Postfach 304 183, 20359 Hamburg

GREECE Socialistiko Ergatiko Komma
c/o Workers Solidarity, P.O. Box 8161, Athens 100 10

HOLLAND Internationale Socialisten
P.O. Box 92025, 1090AA, Amsterdam

IRELAND Socialist Workers Party, P.O. Box 1648, Dublin 8

NEW ZEALAND Socialist Workers Organisation
P.O. Box 8851, Auckland

NORWAY Internasjonale Socialisterr
Postboks 9226 Grønland, 0134 Oslo

POLAND Solidarnosc Socjalistyczna
P.O. Box 12, 01-900 Warszawa 118

PUERTO RICO Organización Socialista Internacional
P.O. Box 22075, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00931-2075

SPAIN Socialismo Internacional, Apartado 563, 08080 Barcelona

ZIMBABWE International Socialist Organisation
P.O. Box 6758, Harare

BEAT BACK BUSH

CONTENTS

We Won't Go Back! ■ 2

I-20 Protest Organizers:
Unite the Fight to Beat Back Bush ■ 5

From Idiot Son to President Idiot ■ 13

Fraud in Florida ■ 17

Bush's Gang of Fat Cats
and Right-Wing Hacks ■ 22

The Shape of Things to Come ■ 28

Howard Zinn:
"The Signs of Resistance" ■ 32

BEAT BACK BUSH

WE WON'T GO BACK!

IF SOMEONE took power like this in Latin America or the Middle East, they'd be called a dictator. But in the United States, they call him "Mr. President."

George W. Bush lost the national popular vote on Election Day. He's one of only three presidents in history to lose the popular vote but win the White House—by getting a majority in the Electoral College, the cobwebbed, 18th-century institution designed to limit democracy and protect the interests of Southern slaveowners.

Yet now it turns out that even the Electoral College vote was rigged. Bush's victory depended on winning Florida's 25 electoral votes. But recounts conducted by media organizations are showing that Gore would have won Florida if all the votes had been counted fairly.

To hold onto Florida, the Bush gang needed fraud—pure and simple. Dubya's baby brother Jeb and his state machine kept as many African Americans away from the polls as possible on Election Day. When that didn't produce an outright victory, Republican fixers descended on the state to protect Bush's razor-thin lead at all costs—including a frat-boy mob of congressional staffers staging a riot outside a Miami-Dade County building where a recount was taking place.

But even that wasn't enough. So the Bush gang turned to the U.S. Supreme Court. Five conservative justices—most of them owing their appointment to the Reagan-Bush White House—gave Dubya what he wanted. Using an absurd legal justification that astonished even mainstream observers, the pro-Bush justices stopped the recount of the Florida vote—and handed their man the White House.

George W. Bush is the most illegitimate president in more than a century—maybe even in U.S. history.

But has that stopped the Bush gang? As Dubya's media adviser Mark McKinnon sneered to reporters: "Whether we won by 9 votes or 9 million is irrelevant. We won. There's nothing in the book that says we have to compromise at this point. Compromise on what?"

Indeed. The man who claimed he would be a "uniter, not a divider" has resurrected almost every right-wing attack of the last 20 years.

Right after taking the oath of office, Bush ordered the Food and Drug Administration to review RU-486, the abortion-inducing drug made available in the U.S. last year. And on the 28th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion, Bush signed an executive order to halt U.S. funding to international organizations that provide abortion counseling.

Both Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney were desperate to avoid the issue of abortion rights during the presidential campaign—because their anti-choice views are so unpopular. But once installed in power, both suggested to reporters that the new administration would consider a legal challenge to *Roe v. Wade*.

The right-wing assault continued on other issues. Bush put pressure on Congress to quickly pass his $1.6 trillion tax cut proposal. If he gets away with it, the richest 1 percent of taxpayers will get 43

percent of the benefits, according to Citizens for Tax Justice—$700 billion for the very people who made out like bandits during the U.S. "miracle" economy while living standards for working people deteriorated.

Dubya also demanded quick action on an education "reform" package, which includes mandatory testing and a voucher system that would strip the public education system of desperately needed funds. His Cabinet officials moved full steam ahead on a plan to let oil companies rip open Alaska's National Arctic Wildlife Refuge. Plus Bush stepped up the Republicans' political attack on unions, most notably with an executive order designed to silence labor's political voice—at the same time as corporate executives spend more money than ever to buy influence in Washington.

And within a month of setting foot in the Oval Office, Bush was following in his father's footsteps—trying to look tough by bombing the defenseless country of Iraq with the world's most sophisticated weapons of mass destruction.

The Bush gang stole the White House, they abandoned the mask of "compassionate conservatism" that they used on the campaign trail, and now they're carrying out a right-wing agenda that a majority of voters rejected in November.

Yet they're getting a free ride.

The mainstream media shamelessly sucked up to Dubya. "A president who entered office with a shaky mandate is performing above expectations," the supposedly liberal *New York Times* declared in an editorial. "Mr. Bush has demonstrated that he takes the presidency seriously. Members of Congress, whether they support him or not, can feel it. The public, no matter how divided on the Florida vote or Attorney General John Ashcroft, seems to sense in this White House a mature insistence on order."

And Democrats in Congress have been as meek as kittens. Eight Democratic senators broke ranks to support the confirmation of the far-right crackpot Ashcroft to become the country's highest law enforcement official—and not a single one of those who voted against took the step of organizing a filibuster to block the nomination.

The Democrats stayed largely quiet when the Bush gang went on the rampage against abortion rights or organized labor. When they did speak up, it was to heap praise on a number of Bush initiatives, from his education proposals to his scheme for funneling federal funds to "faith-based" groups to run social services.

Even the labor movement and liberal organizations like the NAACP and the National Organization for Women (NOW) were sitting out the opening rounds of the Bush assault.

For example, Rev. Jesse Jackson joined labor and the NAACP in bypassing plans to protest Bush's inauguration in Washington, D.C., to build a demonstration in Tallahassee, Fla.—dividing the forces of the opposition at the moment when they could have been most effective together. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has combined verbal statements against some of Bush's outrages with a promise "to work with him" on supposed promises to overhaul Social Security and Medicare.

"In terms of a mass organizing campaign, I don't see it," NOW President Patricia Ireland told the *Progressive* magazine about the prospects for mobilizing a pro-choice opposition to Bush. "If we can fight as hard as we can in Congress to stay even, though it's not inspiring, ultimately the fight is on the state levels. Which means it's a lot more decentralized, i.e., more expensive difficult, multiple battles."

This pessimism in the face of Bush's attacks is a symptom of the crisis facing organized labor and liberal groups like NOW. During eight years of Bill Clinton and Al Gore, they withheld their criticisms or made excuses—while a Demo-

cratic administration dragged mainstream politics to the right with NAFTA, vicious tough-on-crime legislation and the repeal of welfare.

The excuse for backing Clinton was always that a Republican in the White House would be worse. Now there is a Republican in the White House. And union leaders and liberals have become so rusty at mounting mainstream opposition to conservative policies—pursued by Democrats and Republicans alike—that they've been slow to raise an alarm.

This is frustrating for all the people who are ready to fight Bush—to see organizations that have the resources to mount a real challenge do little or nothing.

After all, the potential to build a fight to beat back Bush is massive. Even without the support of the AFL-CIO or mainstream liberal groups, some 25,000 people traveled to Washington on Inauguration Day to tell the commander-in-thief that we won't go back. And there are numerous other struggles drawing people into activity—from the fight against power company rip-offs in California to the mobilizations for April protests against the bosses' Free Trade Area of the Americas.

For every person getting involved in one of these struggles, there are literally thousands more who oppose Bush's attempt to turn back the clock. We can't afford to wait. The movement against Bush has to be built now—step by step.

This pamphlet is a contribution toward that goal. It begins with excerpts from speeches at a forum held in Washington, D.C., after the Inauguration Day protests—with representatives from different movements coming together to talk about the common fight ahead and how to organize it. We've also reprinted articles from *Socialist Worker* newspaper and the *International Socialist Review* to assemble the dirt on Dubya's gang and explain what they're up to. The pamphlet concludes with an interview with veteran activist Howard Zinn, who talks about the struggles of the past and looks forward to the fight for a better future.

We have a fight on our hands today—George W. Bush has made that clear. But the majority of people in the U.S. oppose his conservative policies, which are designed to line the pockets of the already obscenely rich—while the rest of us see our living standards deteriorate, our rights restricted and our hopes for something better trampled on.

It's time for that majority to make its voice heard. We won't go back!

BEAT BACK BUSH

UNITE THE FIGHT TO BEAT BACK BUSH

IN THE days before George W. Bush's inauguration on January 20, Republicans strolled the sidewalks of Washington, D.C., sporting fur coats and cowboy boots. Their limousines clogged the streets in front of fancy hotels, and Bush's ugly mug was on the windows of many stores. They acted like they owned the joint.

But when Inauguration Day arrived, people from across the country came out in the rain and freezing cold to tell Bush and his pals that we're not going back.

Tens of thousands came to the protests to raise a range of issues—from abortion rights to gay rights, from the death penalty to the U.S. Navy's occupation of Vieques in Puerto Rico to just plain outrage at Bush's theft of the White House.

Along the Inaugural Parade route, protesters mobilized by the Justice Action Movement outnumbered Bush supporters at some points. At 14th and Pennsylvania, they took over bleachers reserved for ticket-holding Republicans.

Just east of the Capitol building, where the president-select was taking the oath of office, busloads of people gathered for a demonstration called by Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network. The protesters took their own oath—to fight Bush every step of the way—and then marched to the Supreme Court building and surrounded it.

After Bush's motorcade sped past protesters on the way to the White House, hundreds of activists gathered for a rally at Washington's First Congregational Church to discuss the fight ahead. These are excerpts from speeches given by representatives of the different organizations that mobilized for the January 20 protests.

■

Dedrick Muhammad *is crisis coordinator for Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network (NAN).*

REV. SHARPTON sent me to speak here because we see that we have a long next four years and a lot of work for us to come together and mobilize. We appreciate the Green Party and all these various organizations going out and supporting our march, where we rallied in Stanton Park and then surrounded the Supreme Court—because that's where this current president was selected, not elected.

There's a lot of talk about how we're going to work together. But I think we've seen how we're going to work together—we already are.

On television, a Republican senator was trying dismiss the protesters, saying that now it seems that you can't do anything without protesters coming out. Well, he hasn't seen anything yet.

I get hundreds of calls a day from all over the country—particularly from New York City—from mothers crying to me about their sons and daughters being arrested on false charges. I had a kid who was arrested for being in a snowball fight outside his home. In some ways, you want to laugh, but you really want to cry when you think about a 16-year-old being put in prison for doing nothing except

standing outside his apartment.

About 50 percent of the African American population my age already have criminal records. Right now, I'm on probation—for a demonstration against the shooting of Patrick Dorismond and Amadou Diallo in New York City. Rev. Sharpton keeps these protests pretty mild in a lot of ways, because he knows a lot of people in the community can't afford to go to jail again.

But during this demonstration, the police started pushing around my sister, and even though I am a member of NAN and a follower of nonviolence, I couldn't allow the police to push my sister around. That ended up with me being in jail and my sister being in a cast for over a month.

Some people will be able to go out in the street doing direct action, and some people won't. But as long as we know that we're all on the same side, it's going to a great next four years.

No justice, no peace!

Rev. Graylan Hagler *is pastor of the Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ and a veteran civil rights activist.*

I WANT to start with a page from history. You're here in the First Congregational Church, which is my sister church. This was a church that took a very strong abolitionist position 140 years ago. There was a First Congregational Church in Springfield, Mass., where there was a man by the name of John Brown. John Brown left that church with his Bible in his hand when he went to Lawrence, Kansas, and then when he went to Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

I start this way because I need for us to understand that our cause is no less than the liberation that abolitionists fought for—that John Brown fought for.

We stand on a day and at a time when we're angry and we're outraged and, in many ways, we're disappointed. But I want to say to you that you can't be silent, and you needn't surrender. You must stand up and speak truth to power and make sure that the voices of justice are heard—by any means necessary!

I love history. You have to look backwards in order to understand where you stand. And looking backwards, you get a picture of where you need to go.

In 1877, 124 years ago, Rutherford B. Hayes came to office as president. He wasn't elected with the popular vote—he lost the popular vote to Samuel Tilden of New York. But he promised that if he got the vote from the election commission set up to decide who would get the White House, he would do a few things. And one of those things would be to remove federal troops from the South who were there after the Civil War to enforce rights for former slaves.

But where do you think you are today? You have somebody in the White House who wasn't elected by the popular vote, who represents big business, who represents all of the greedy folks of our society, who represents white supremacists, who represents state's rights.

We've got to fight. In every place and every corner, wherever we live, we have to take on their agenda. For those who stand against justice and democracy, we must organize ourselves to make their lives damned uncomfortable—not just today but every single day after this day.

We got too comfortable. Some of us said that Gore was going to do it for us or Clinton was going to do it for us. But if you look at the last eight years, you realize that nothing was done for us. And let me tell you, Bush isn't going to do it for you—or Bush's daddy or Dick Cheney or any of those fools who wear suits instead of robes.

Don't surrender. Don't give up. And most of all, don't feel discouraged. Early on, when the church was fighting me because of some of my political ways, I heard someone say that he likes to fight. That's right—when I've got a good fight like this one ahead of us, all I can say is: Party on, party on!

Roger Newell *is a longtime statehood activist in Washington, D.C., and works for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.*

I WANT to welcome you to the political colony of Washington, D.C. You're in the midst of a community of more than a half million people who are denied many of the basic political and economic rights you have in your home states and cities.

So this is an appropriate venue for us today—for righteous indignation. Because right here in Washington, D.C., you see a test case for things that will appear on the national agenda in the years to come.

You see residents being stripped of their right to elect members of the local board of education that determines how their children will be taught in the future. You see the city's only public hospital being shut down. You see jobs being shipped away and government workers being privatized or downsized. You see hotels going up and restaurants appearing, but no public housing. You see laws being passed where you can't speak in public unless you get the okay of the chief of police.

This is the capital of democracy, so they say. But this is a laboratory for fascism and oppression. And you will see these things across the country over the next four years—unless we take a stand and tell them that this will not happen on our watch, this will not stand in our communities.

What we have here in Washington, D.C., on the day of the inauguration is basically the revenge of the nerds. We have these people who didn't have the capacity to convince a majority in the U.S. that an ill-conceived, evil, racist, oppressive plan was what this country needed. So they stole the election.

And if there's a message that we need to take from today, it's that we have to move from just being activists to being organizers. Being organizers means that, week in and week out, we double, triple and quadruple the size of this movement.

We have to reach deep into those reservoirs of discontent—into the poor and working-class communities. They know in their hearts that they don't trust Bush, and they don't trust the system. But they want to know how they can fight back. And that's what we've got to show them—that you can fight back, and you can win.

The reason that people were out on the streets in the rain and cold today is because they believe they can make a difference. And that's what we have to get across to these communities.

It's a question of who will set the policy of this nation. Is it going to be the ruling class? Is it going to be corporate officials? Is it going to be the right wing? Or is it going to be the people?

If it's going to be the people, then we have to do what's necessary to make sure the people's voice is heard strong, clear and confident—in the streets, in the classrooms, in the corporate board meetings we disrupt, in the churches and everywhere the people are. It has to become the common sense of a majority of people in this country that there's something wrong with this boy George W. Bush.

In this county, in the year of 2001, you have John Ashcroft, who has the audacity to stand before Congress and say, "I didn't know Bob Jones was a racist institution. I didn't know *Southern Partisan* magazine was racist."

That someone would have the audacity to say that in this day and time speaks directly to his belief not that anything he did was right or wrong. He's saying that he can be publicly comfortable with that stuff because *you* can't do anything about it—that you can't do nothing to me because I'm part of a good ol' boy fraternity where we don't criticize each other. I know the Republicans are going to vote for me and some of the yellow-dog Dem-

ocrats are going to vote for me, so I'm going to be confirmed. So just because I'm racist, that shouldn't discredit me. I'm here in a whole fraternity of racists, so therefore, it's okay.

What we're here to do is show that we won't forget it—that we will remember and, more importantly, that we will organize.

I hope that the next time you come back to Washington, we'll organize so that people from D.C. won't be outnumbered—and you'll be here supporting the demand that they have the right of other American citizens, to be able to vote in Congress.

D.C. doesn't have voting representation in Congress. Yet they take tax money here from residents to fund huge corporations, like Lockheed Martin, Martin Marietta. What we need to do is show that you can't open your lips to talk about democracy and justice while you're still oppressing the people of Washington, D.C. If we do that, D.C. residents will be standing shoulder to shoulder with you every time you come to Washington and every time you take on George W. Bush.

It will be good fight against a common enemy, because there's just something about that boy George W. Bush that ain't right. Keep up the struggle.

Jay Marx *is an activist with the Justice Action Movement (JAM).*

THE MOST important thing that we can do right now is come together and find out what we have in common—what we can agree about and build together. What the opposition does is find ways to divide us.

JAM got together before we knew it was Bush or Gore to fight for the right to get out and fight—to protest at the inauguration. And it was the most beautiful thing today to watch.

I have to say that this was my first action—the first time I've gotten out and really protested in the streets. I tried to get involved with the A-16 anti-globalization protests, but it's hard to stay involved. It takes work, and most of all, it takes organization. It's getting out there and finding out what needs to be done and the taking initiative to do it.

This activism movement just started. What happened today is amazing, but it's just beginning.

I grew up in Denver, Colo., and D.C. is another world, another planet. I wasn't even aware that D.C. didn't have a vote, that D.C. doesn't have representation in the Senate, not even a voice in the House of Representatives. We should be outraged. There's no excuse for Washington not to have a vote, except racism. It's up to the people of D.C. to demand that of Bush.

We need to start now. In all of history, the only time that anything ever happened is now. Revolutionary changes of understanding can take place instantly in a teaching moment. It started happening today. Keep the ball rolling. Get involved.

Ain't no power like the power of the people 'cause the power of the people don't stop!

Njoki Njoroge Njehû *is director of Fifty Years is Enough, an organization that opposes the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).*

A FEW years ago, I remember being at a demonstration against Shell Oil shortly after Nigerian military's execution of the Ogani Nine. And it was pouring rain, just like today. We got there very excited just as the heavens opened, and people were going to stay because they were already soaked. We started a chant, "Nigerians are dying, the heavens are crying." And I believe that was happening today—the heavens were joining in our crying.

It's a scary moment when you think about what could happen with Bush. But it's also an important and hopeful moment.

I just got back from Haiti, where the U.S. government is criticizing the elections at the end of last November—because they say there was no credible opposition to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The attack wasn't true. But I don't know what we call what happened down in Florida. I don't know what we call what happened at the Supreme Court. It's a fantasy for the U.S. government to make sweeping judgements about the Haitian election.

The reason I'm telling you about my trip to Haiti is that my message is about international solidarity. We met with activists and trade unionists—unionists who are on the run, so they have their bags ready and travel from place to place to sleep. They wanted to tell me about their conditions, so I could report what was going on.

When we talk about resisting the World Bank and the IMF, Haiti is that place. Everybody talks about the IMF plan there, which is an oppressive plan. Once you admit that's what is going on, then you have to resist.

As you look ahead to the next year, remember that the World Bank and IMF will be back in Washington. So I want to ask you to stay tuned. And remember that they don't just stay in Washington. They go to so many places, trying to send their message.

But we have to prove to them that no matter where they go, we will be there—speaking truth to power and fighting on. Resistance is not futile.

Darby Tillis *is a former death row prisoner from Illinois who was proven innocent and set free in 1987—after nine years behind bars waiting to die. He spoke out as a member of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty.*

I WANTED to speak here because for many years, I thought I'd never be in the free world again. And I never thought that there would be people like you, coming out in great numbers to fight for this great cause.

I pray to you, Mr. Bush, that you must stop your killing machine. It's faulty, and it's been exposed. It's been exposed because of groups like the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, marching and protesting and speaking out against it.

That's why we have a moratorium in the state of Illinois. And that fight has been taken all the way to the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., where I've had the pleasure of meeting with Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. and Hurricane Carter to fight for a federal moratorium against the death penalty.

One December 8, 1977, I walked into a Chicago police station of my own free will to inquire about a rumor that the police wanted to talk to me. At that time, there was two men already incarcerated, and I was offered a deal to snitch on them—to implicate myself in the crime and get them convicted. I refused, and as a result, I ended up in jail.

One of the men already locked up was Black, and the other was white. The white man was set free. He never went to trial. He was given time served to conceal the conspiracy and confirm the convictions against the two of us.

We went through five trials and three hung juries before being set free. It was hard, long and painful. In prison, you suffer every kind of abuse. You go from one crisis to another crisis. After I was released, I came out into a city where people rejected me, labeled me, branded me.

I have never received compensation for being wrongly imprisoned. But I've been blessed. I've been blessed to have a family—with a 10-year-old son on the honor roll. And even though I've suffered rejection, look at the wonderful people tonight that have embraced me. Look at the wonderful people tonight that join with me in fighting against the sickness that so many people suffer throughout this country. There are brothers and sisters out there tonight who feel much better knowing

that you're here.

When I was in prison, there wasn't the Campaign to End the Death Penalty. Nobody was for us. But thanks to the people who started the Campaign, it's now a great cause.

The judge in my case is now doing time in the federal penitentiary for corruption on the bench. There are a few judges that went to the penitentiary for taking money. But there's not been one judge that's gone to jail for sending innocent men to jail. The worst crime in the world is to take an innocent man from his family and send him to jail. Society has to stop looking at judges and state's attorneys as heroes of the community.

There's an evil in the courthouse—the evil of corruption. We must work to overthrow it. You're going to make the difference. You are making the difference.

Thirteen years ago, a reporter asked if I was angry. I said no. Recently, Mike Wallace from "60 Minutes" asked me if I was angry, and I said yes. I'm very angry, because I'm tired of seeing the parade of good men and women being railroaded into the penal system.

Moratorium today, abolition tomorrow!

Ron Daniels *is executive director of the Center for Constitutional Research and an organizer for the January 20 protest outside the U.S. Supreme Court building.*

THERE WERE many magnificent moments today. But one of the most magnificent moments was at the Supreme Court, when all the groups got together. Momentarily, it was a little difficult, and we had a traffic jam. But everybody was cooperating.

We said we wanted to put a human ring around the scene of the crime—you know how the police put the barrier tape up. That was the crime scene, and we surrounded it today. Because we're saying—in this country, from this moment forward—that all our different organizations have different interests to some extent, but we have one goal. And that goal is to really make America, as the poet Langston Hughes said, what it's never been: a democracy.

I just left the independent media center, and it was great. We had about an hour's worth of conversations there, using the Internet to get the word out all over the country. And I'm just happy that, not only the International Socialist Organization, which has so many dynamic young people, but young people from all over the country and all over the world are getting involved.

We have nothing to be discouraged about. They stole the election, and they inaugurated the thief today. But that's all right, because we're going to keep struggling. We're going to keep working, and we're going to take democracy back. We're going to have a country where all the people who live here can be a bright beacon of hope and promise to the entire human world as we save this planet.

So let's keep fighting, let's keep pushing. Forward ever, backward never.

Ahmed Shawki *is editor of* International Socialist Review *and a member of the International Socialist Organization.*

I FIRST met Brother Ron Daniels in 1980. And I mention the year not to put a date on our ages, but to remember another election that took place that year—an election that brought Ronald Reagan to office. We now have in office a group of people who are inheritors of Reagan's administrations in 1980 and 1984, who came to prominence under Bush Senior, and who are being brought back to Washington to run the country and—they believe—the world.

But this world isn't the world of 1980.

Before this meeting, Martin Luther King was on my mind, as I'm sure he was on many other people's minds, since the anniversary of his birth was only a few days ago. I was reading a speech that he gave the night before his assassination. And I want to highlight one lesson of that speech.

He said that if he had to be born at any time in history, he wouldn't choose the old ancient Egyptian civilization, he wouldn't choose the old Greek civilization, he wouldn't choose the Roman Empire. He wouldn't choose any other period but the period that he was in right there and right then.

This was even though the threat of nuclear annihilation existed, even though racism and racist violence existed, even though the war in Vietnam existed, even though there was class inequality, class exploitation and oppression. Because, he said, we stand here with the possibility to transform society, and we wouldn't trade this moment for anything else.

I think the same, and I think that's the feeling of every young person in the room. But I have to speak for the older people in the room as well—those people who grew a little heavier or grew a little discouraged.

Today, we stand proud—stand 10 feet tall. And it's not the swagger of the Republicans and of the ruling class, with their limousines and their militaries. It's the pride of being able to stand up for ourselves and fight for what's right. That's the message that runs through this entire protest.

Because our standing 10 feet tall is also accompanied by a sense of humility. I can't ignore everyone else when I hear the accounts today of brothers and sisters in struggle and what they've gone through. We are partners in that struggle—who have to learn to fight together against a common enemy, but also to discuss and disagree and make sure we get to our aim.

This will not be a repeat of 1980. The first reason is that Reagan's slogan was: "Tell me if you're better off." We have an answer to that question. We've had 20 years of attacks, both from the three Republican administrations and the Clinton-Gore administration that came after that—what we called Republican Lite.

They said they would bring prosperity at home and peace abroad. What they brought us was Grenada, Haiti, Libya, Iraq, Nicaragua, And now they're fighting to build a new missile defense system that threatens the world. And that's not to mention the war that they just conducted in Europe last year.

What they brought at home was, instead of a war on poverty, a war on the poor. And as a result, in the richest country in the world, the top 1 percent own the largest share of the proportionate wealth than any other advanced industrial country. That's what the "American Way" has come to mean internationally.

There's a new American way, but I won't call it that. There's a new *activist* way. An alternative way. Our way as against their way—which was shown in Seattle, in the April protests in D.C. and at the August 26 march for civil rights and against racial profiling.

This won't be a repeat of 1980 for a very simple reason. They divided us then. They said, let's crack down on crime, which is a code for racism. Let's crack down on welfare. Let's crack down on abortion. And a number of groups allowed those particular struggles to be isolated from one another.

You can't do that today. They've done us a service in attacking all our rights—on every front. They've made it clear to more and more people the commonality of interests that we have and the necessity of joining together in struggle.

And struggle is the operative word. The abolitionist Frederick Douglass said it best when he said that power concedes nothing without a struggle.

As he wrote: "The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle...If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and

yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its mighty waters...Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

If there's a message to take out of here tonight, I think it's that the question of struggle is on the order of the day—not only in order to change society but also in order to change ourselves. Our movement isn't the same as it was in April at the anti-globalization demos. It's not the same as it was at the civil rights demo.

The civil rights demo and the anti-globalization movement were largely separate then. I don't mean they weren't sympathetic to each other, but they didn't come together as a movement. But the attack on our political, economic and civil rights by this administration is forcing people to bring together economic, political and civil rights questions.

And it's only the beginning, because our movement is going to be transformed yet again—in its numbers and its ability to reach people. For the first time in many years, people can smell it.

You know the right wingers always say, "Don't give them an inch, they'll want a mile." Well, you know what, they were right. Don't give us an inch, we'll take a mile. Don't give us a foot on the parade route, we'll take over the parade route.

No justice, no peace!

BEAT BACK BUSH

FROM IDIOT SON TO PRESIDENT IDIOT

By Alan Maass
***International Socialist Review,** February-March, 2001*

EVEN LEAVING aside his theft of the White House in one of the most appalling frauds in the history of American politics, there's something surreal about George W. Bush being president of the United States.

This is a man who drifted through the finest schools in the country on the strength of his name alone. Most of his business ventures were failures, though he himself prospered by relying on the kindness of his father's friends. He's never had to do a real day's work in his life—at least as most people would understand it.

This is a man who can only be described as a pampered mediocrity—yet who has risen to the very top.

As the late journalist Lars Erik-Nelson wrote last year in the *New York Review of Books:* "Bush's spectacular career rebuts the notion that America has become a meritocracy, in which we are all born equal and then judged upon our intelligence, talent, creativity or aggressiveness.

"Bush is an aristocrat. His successes are in one way or another a direct consequence of his name and family, and he has been exempt from the normal competition—academic, financial, professional, political—that confronts most Americans and sorts them on life's ladder. He comes from the powerful and half-hidden world whose most important question is not 'What do you know?' but 'Who are your people?'

"On the basis of his own performance, he is more qualified to be King of England, through his father's kinship with the Queen, than president."

During the election campaign, Bush did his best to hide his background as American royalty. He pretended that he was a political outsider with few connections to the Washington establishment—just a down-to-earth guy from the all-American community of Midland, Texas.

Dubya did grow up in Midland, but he also spent summer vacations in Florida—at a family compound in an exclusive area north of Palm Beach, where the neighbors were named Mellon, Ford, Roosevelt, Vanderbilt and Harriman. For high school, Bush was sent off to the famous Phillips Academy prep school in Andover, Mass. He didn't really have the grades to get in. But his father had gone there.

Dubya used the same method to get into Yale University. Like his father before him and his father before that, he joined the Skull and Bones secret society. Plus there were his duties at Yale's party fraternity Delta Kappa Epsilon—aside from drinking and womanizing, Dubya apparently took DKE's traditions seriously, causing a minor stir on campus when he defended the practice of branding fraternity pledges. With all this to occupy his time, Bush understandably didn't shine in the classroom.

Dubya left college in the late 1960s, at the height of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Thanks to his father's political connections, he avoided going to war by

snagging a coveted spot in the Texas Air National Guard—bypassing a long waiting list. He even managed to score a lieutenant's commission after just five weeks of basic training and no officer's training.

But this good fortune didn't stop Dubya from skipping out on his duties from May 1972 to May 1973, when he was supposed to have transferred to the Alabama Air National Guard but simply never showed up. Predictably, he was never busted for it.

With degrees from Yale and Harvard Business School in hand, Dubya followed his father into the oil business. This should have been a win-win situation. By the 1970s, Texas politicians had filled the tax code with so many breaks for the oil industry that finding oil wasn't really necessary for financial success.

Nevertheless, in short order, Dubya's oil drilling company was on the verge of going under. But it never quite did. Dubya was bailed out again and again by a series of investors who were willing to take a bath—as a favor to Papa Bush, who was fast climbing up the Republican establishment in Washington.

Dubya had the same good luck in the baseball business. He was the front man for a consortium of investors who bought the Texas Rangers. He had to borrow the $600,000 that he invested in the team—a stake that turned into $15 million after the city of Arlington, Texas, built the Rangers a new stadium with public money.

Showing an uncharacteristic thoughtfulness about his place in life, Bush once said of his Ranger years: "I was a pit bull on the pant leg of opportunity."

Bush went into politics the same way he entered the business world—at the top. His very first elected office was governor of Texas, which he won in 1994, riding the coattails of the "Republican Revolution" that took control of Congress away from the Democrats.

The World According to George W. Bush

"I'm hopeful. I know there is a lot of ambition in Washington, obviously. But I hope the ambitious realize that they are more likely to succeed with success as opposed to failure."

"If he's—the inference is that somehow he thinks slavery is a—is a noble institution I would—I would strongly reject that assumption—that John Ashcroft is an open-minded, inclusive person."

"They want the federal government controlling Social Security like it's some kind of federal program."

"I confirmed to the prime minister that we appreciate our friendship."

"I appreciate that question because I, in the state of Texas, had heard a lot of discussion about a faith-based initiative eroding the important bridge between church and state."

"They said, 'You know, this issue doesn't seem to resignate with the people.' And I said, you know something? Whether it resignates or not doesn't matter to me, because I stand for doing what's the right thing, and what the right thing is hearing the voices of people who work."

"My pro-life position is I believe there's life. It's not necessarily based in religion."

"It's important for us to explain to our nation that life is important. It's not only life of babies, but it's life of children living in, you know, the dark dungeons of the Internet."

"Dick Cheney and I do not want this nation to be in a recession. We want anybody who can find work to be able to find work."

"They misunderestimated me."

"I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully."

"Families is where our nation finds hope, where wings take dream."

"I mean, there needs to be a wholesale effort against racial profiling, which is illiterate children."

"Natural gas is hemispheric. I like to call it hemispheric in nature because it is a product that we can find in our neighborhoods."

"Drug therapies are replacing a lot of medicines as we used to know it."

"I think if you know what you believe, it makes it a lot easier to answer questions. I can't answer your question."

"I will have a foreign-handed foreign policy."

"What I am against is quotas. I am against hard quotas, quotas they basically delineate based upon whatever. However they delineate, quotas, I think vulcanize society. So I don't know how that fits into what everybody else is saying, their relative positions, but that's my position."

"It is clear our nation is reliant upon big foreign oil. More and more of our imports come from overseas."

"Well, I think if you say you're going to do something and don't do it, that's trustworthiness."

"It's your money. You paid for it."

"I'm gonna talk about the ideal world, Chris. I've read—I understand reality. If you're asking me as the president, would I understand reality, I do."

"This may sound a little West Texan to you, but I like it. When I'm talking about—when I'm talking about myself, and when he's talking about myself, all of us are talking about me."

"It's clearly a budget. It's got a lot of numbers in it."

"There's no such thing as legacies. At least, there is a legacy, but I'll never see it."

"The senator has got to understand if he's going to have—he can't have it both ways. He can't take the high horse and then claim the low road."

"I know how hard it is for you to put food on your family."

"I believe the results of focusing our attention and energy on teaching children to read and having an education system that's responsive to the child and to the parents, as opposed to mired in a system that refuses to change, will make America what we want it to be—a literate country and a hopefuller country."

"When I was coming up, it was a dangerous world, and you knew exactly who they were. It was 'us' vs. 'them,' and it was clear who 'them' was. Today, we are not so sure who the 'they' are, but we know they're there."

"I am mindful not only of preserving executive powers for myself, but for predecessors as well."

From the start, Bush showed his talents for taking care of the rich. One of his first initiatives was "tort reform"—legislation that restricted people's ability to sue corporations and limited the amount of money big business could be made to pay in penalties. According to the Center for Economic Justice in Austin, Texas insurance companies enjoyed extra profits of $3 billion thanks to Bush's law.

Bush got right to work on the environment, too. During his reign, not a single representative from an environmental or consumer group served on the state's Natural Resources Conservation Commission.

When Bush decided to "reform" Texas pollution laws, his hacks on the commission got together with representatives of the oil and chemical industries to write legislation that allowed corporations to police themselves. According to the Texas environmental group Public Research Works, the same companies that "helped" Bush rewrite the laws pumped $1.5 million into Bush's 1998 campaign for governor—and millions more into his presidential campaign.

Meanwhile, under Bush's reign, Houston passed up Los Angeles as the most polluted city in the country.

As at every stage of his life, Bush steered clear of hard work. He started most days at 9 a.m., took two hours for lunch and was out of the office by 5 p.m. —and that still left time for afternoons of computer solitaire or video golf.

Fortunately for Dubya, the Texas constitution limits the powers of the governor—so he just didn't have that much to do. But there was one duty that he couldn't shake, much as he tried to limit his attention to it—his role as executioner.

During his six years in the governor's mansion, Bush oversaw 152 executions—about one-fifth of all executions in the U.S. as a whole for the last quarter century. And for all his hot air about taking a careful look at death penalty cases, Dubya spent an average of about 15 minutes on every prisoner who was put to death on his watch.

By last summer, even the mainstream media was beginning to ask questions about Bush's killing machine. Dubya's courageous response was to blame somebody else. He claimed that he was powerless to stop an execution unless the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles voted for clemency.

That was a crock. Bush appointed the pardon board. In fact, in the one case in six years in which Bush commuted a death sentence, he intervened with board members to recommend clemency.

And there's no getting around Bush's personal responsibility for speeding up Texas' machinery of death to its record-breaking pace of 40 executions last year —the most in a single state in one year in U.S. history.

Dubya championed the 1995 Texas law that put strict time limits on death row appeals—including a despicable requirement that new evidence of innocence be presented within 30 days after conviction. Bush's goal for the law was to accelerate the time between sentencing and execution to an average of seven years or less. Given that time span, every one of the seven men found innocent and released from death row in Texas since 1988 would have died in the execution chamber.

Bush's record in Texas is clear from the statistics: first in executions, first in the percentage of children without health insurance, first in air and water pollution and dead last in spending on teachers.

And now he's out to do the same to the U.S. as a whole.

BEAT BACK BUSH

FRAUD IN FLORIDA

By Eric Ruder
***Socialist Worker,** November 24, 2000, January 5, 2001*

WHEN FLORIDA Gov. Jeb Bush vowed that Florida would go to his brother on Election Day, his statement had an ominous ring. After all, Al Gore led George W. Bush in most Florida polls. His promises to protect Social Security and enact a Medicare prescription drug benefit were tailored to appeal in Florida.

But Jeb Bush just oozed confidence. Many had to wonder: Was the fix in?

Now we know.

"There are just too many shenanigans going on," said Stan McKnight of Juno Beach, a town in Palm Beach County in southern Florida. "I know that Jeb Bush promised his family that he would deliver the state of Florida to them, and I am not above believing that anything is possible as far as Republican dirty tricks.

"There have been a lot of dirty-trick Republican people in this area for many years. This is the county that's home to Rush Limbaugh, and I don't put anything past these people."

To hold onto Florida, the Bush gang fought a no-holds-barred battle. They imported fanatics from around the country to harass local election officials trying to carry out recounts. The man who bashed lawyers during the campaign was the first into the courtroom. But in the end, Bush's victory was assured by a 5-4 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court—with the backbone of the pro-Bush majority provided by four justices appointed when Dubya's father was knocking around the White House.

"You can't really call Bush the president-elect because he wasn't elected," Rev. Marshall Hatch told a meeting of Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition in Chicago. "He's the president-select because he was selected by the Supreme Court."

Bush and Co. moved into the White House because they managed to stop a fair recount of the presidential vote in Florida. But the Republicans' shenanigans began earlier.

The most explosive election scandal in Florida—one that the media and the mainstream politicians have tried to bury —was the scheme to disenfranchise Black voters across Florida. Dirty tricks are nothing new in U.S. elections. But the closeness of the Florida outcome cast a spotlight on the corruption—and exposed how politicians regularly steal people's democratic right to vote.

Bob Kellner, who lives in Broward County, says poll workers used language barriers to win a few Bush votes in heavily Democratic areas. "In Miami, many Haitian voters don't speak English," Kellner said. "So they had pictures of the candidates lined up. People would point to the candidate they wanted to vote for—usually Gore—and then poll workers, who were largely Cuban supporters of Bush, would 'help' them vote for Bush."

That was if voters actually made it to the voting booth. Large numbers had to

deal with old-fashioned racist intimidation—recalling stories of the Jim Crow South before the civil rights movement. Jacques Eyssallenne's experience was repeated countless times in heavily Haitian American precincts.

"While I was away at college, I still had my permanent address in Broward County," Eyssallenne said. "But they wouldn't let me vote—even though my permanent address is there. What perplexed me was that there were big posters at the polling stations that said if you live outside that precinct or have a different address than the one you used to have, it's a third-degree felony punishable by up to five years in prison. And most people just don't want to deal with that.

"Not every voting place had those signs. They had the signs in areas that were predominantly Caribbean American—I'm talking about Haitians, Jamaicans, Trinidadians and other Caribbean people."

In several counties, state police set up roadblocks near polling stations to check driver's licenses and look for expired tags—in clear violation of their own procedures. But Florida Highway Patrol spokesperson Ken Howes dismissed all criticism. "They're just out there doing their job," Howes said. "Yes, departmental policy was violated, but the violations were really only administrative oversights."

Because of an expected high turnout, state officials had distributed laptop computers to various precincts so election workers could tap into a central state database and confirm voter registration records. But only one of the laptops went to a predominantly Black area. Poll workers in other precincts had to battle busy signals to get through to an office in the state capital of Tallahassee. The result was long lines that drove many voters away.

But getting to the voting booth was no guarantee for African Americans. Florida election officials threw out more than 187,000 completed ballots because of mistakes. More than half came from Black precincts.

One reason for this epidemic of spoiled ballots is that antiquated punch-card machines were concentrated in Black areas. But Republicans had a different explanation—African Americans were too dumb to vote properly. "The NAACP did a tremendous job of turnout in Florida," a GOP strategist told one reporter. "But in a way, they overachieved and got people out who couldn't follow instructions."

Tom Feeney, speaker of the Florida House of Representatives and chief architect of the legislature's scheme to throw the election to Bush, was just as crude. "Voter confusion isn't a reason for whining or crying or having a revote," he snarled. "It may be a reason to require literacy tests."

"The tactics have changed, but the goal remains depressingly the same," wrote *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert. "Keep the coloreds, the Blacks, the African Americans—whatever they're called in the particular instance—keep them out of the voting booths. Do not let them vote! If you can find a way to stop them, stop them."

As it became clear how many Blacks had been stopped from voting, about 500 students from historically Black Florida A&M University organized a sit-in at the state capitol in Tallahassee. "We should be concerned about every man and woman's freedom to cast a vote without intimidation or confusion," said R. Jai Howard, vice president of the student government. "We seek accountability from our state officials and request that they conduct an investigation into the discrepancies across the state."

For many activists, the sit-in was a natural outgrowth of protests they participated in earlier this year—against Jeb Bush's "One Florida" plan to ban affirmative action in state government and college admissions. The demonstrators camped out for 22 hours and demanded a meeting with either Secretary of State Katherine Harris or Attorney General Bob Butterworth. Neither showed.

In West Palm Beach, Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition joined with other organizations to protest Palm Beach County's now notorious "butterfly" ballot. The confusing ballot layout led thousands of Jewish seniors to cast their vote for Hitler enthusiast Pat Buchanan. Chanting "Every vote counts" and "Revote," a crowd of several thousand—including Blacks, Jews, Haitians and the elderly—packed an outdoor amphitheater November 13.

"We're here to put a face on farmworkers who speak Spanish but couldn't get assistance on Election Day, on Jewish Holocaust survivors who were deceived into a vote that was not their intent, to put a face on students across the state who had a voter registration card but their names were not at the poll," Jack-

"Cleansing" Blacks from the voter rolls

FRAUD IN Florida wasn't limited to Election Day. State officials spent months—and millions of dollars—figuring out how to get likely Gore voters off the voting rolls.

In 1998, Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris hired DBT Online, a subsidiary of the company ChoicePoint, to "scrub" Florida's voter rolls—on the basis of an 1868 Florida law that bars convicted felons from voting for life.

Florida is one of 32 states that deny convicted felons the right to vote for some length of time after they leave prison. In Florida, felons lose their voting rights for life—leaving more than 525,000 to sit out Election 2000. An incredible one in three Black men—roughly 139,000—were disenfranchised. That alone outweighed all the disputed votes in Florida's election.

And Gore bears part of the responsibility. He and President Clinton have overseen a massive expansion of the prison-industrial complex—with the number of people behind bars rising from 1.3 million to 2 million during their eight years in office.

Early in 2000, ChoicePoint came up with an initial list of 8,000 "ex-felons" to be dropped from the rolls. But no one on the list had committed a felony. ChoicePoint admitted its error and blamed the problem on the source of its data—the state of Texas.

If that sounds fishy, consider that ChoicePoint's executive board is teeming with Republican Party heavies. For example, director Ken Langone was chair of New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's aborted run for senator against Hillary Rodham Clinton.

After its flawed first try at "cleansing," ChoicePoint came back with an "improved" list of 173,000 people. But the list was still riddled with errors.

Madison County election supervisor Linda Howell had a particularly good reason to disregard the list. She was on it—though she had never committed a felony.

Hillsborough County elections officials found that about 15 percent of local voters on the second ChoicePoint list shouldn't have been. Blacks made up 54 percent of the people on the list for Hillsborough County—though only 11.6 percent of the county's voters are Black. Even adjusting for the higher rate at which Blacks are convicted of felonies, the list still shows a revolting racial bias.

son told the crowd.

A rabbi who spoke reminded demonstrators of how Blacks and Jews fought together during the civil rights movement—and recalled the story of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, three civil rights workers who were murdered by racists in 1964.

Everyone at the rally had a story to tell.

Ernest Duval, a member of Service Employees International Union Local 1115, made an error because the ballot was so confusing. Under Florida law, he had the right to request a new ballot. "But when I told the poll workers that I needed a new ballot, they said I couldn't have another one," Duval said. "So I went back to the booth and punched a second time. That's why I punched twice."

One worker in charge of a polling station expressed anger at the election system.

A little help from the Supreme Court

IT WASN'T hard to see that the U.S. Supreme Court decision giving Bush a victory in the Florida vote was nakedly political. Of the court's nine justices, five veteran conservatives with ties to the Republican Party voted to stop the manual recounts of disputed ballots in Florida.

But even mainstream commentators were startled by their pathetic legal justification. The pro-Bush majority claimed that recounting disputed ballots in Florida would violate the rights of other voters under the "equal protection" clause of the Constitution.

"[E]qual protection was added to the Constitution of the United States after the Civil War for the express purpose of protecting African Americans against the efforts of state officials in Florida and other states of the South to deny emancipated slaves the equal protection of the laws," wrote Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney in the *New York Times*.

"Now we are poised to have those fine, noble words become the excuse used not only to thwart the will of the people of the United States as to who should be president but to ensure that the efforts of state officials to disenfranchise the descendants of slaves will succeed."

What's more, as Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.) pointed out to *Socialist Worker*, the justices' concern about "equal protection" only applied to the recount.

"If the Supreme Court applied this same logic to all the schools in Florida—that every public school must be as awesome as the most awesome public school in the state, that we need to take poor public schools and make all of them as good as the best—then you would have a standard that the state would have to pursue in order to raise the quality of education for all children," Jackson said.

"But the Supreme Court also specifically said in the chad case that this ruling only applies to chads. We aren't gonna use it for anything else!

"Now that we've seen what the standard is, we want an interpretation that takes the same high standard and applies it to everyone's health care. The Court overnight can elect a president. The Court overnight could change education. But it has to apply the equal protection standard that it applied to chads to children."

"I was a clerk at precinct 58, called Singer Island, in Palm Beach County," said Nina Holland. "People had a hard time understanding the ballot. I kept calling to ask the election people, 'What should I do?' Nobody knew. They just said let them vote. I saw older people punching, punching, punching. A lot of people were upset, and I gave people that came to me another ballot. But some of them were too embarrassed to say they didn't know how to vote."

Jennifer Lowery-Bell, who is a nurse, came all the way from the Washington, D.C., area to demonstrate. "We drove down on Friday and got here Saturday because an injustice has taken place here in the state of Florida," she said. "All they have to do is let Palm Beach revote. What's the problem? But Bush is afraid."

In order to document widespread irregularities at the polls, NAACP President Kweisi Mfume came to Miami and held a daylong meeting during which thousands of people filled out affidavits detailing problems on Election Day.

But the Democrats kept their distance. While their high-priced lawyers packed into courtrooms to debate pregnant, pimpled and dimpled chads, Democratic politicians didn't want to touch the far more glaring injustices of Florida's election.

They may well pay a price for their timidity. "I think the Democrats should push it to the end, because if they don't and let the people down, a lot of people will turn against the Democratic Party," said Marie Fredric, a Haitian resident of Miami.

BEAT BACK BUSH

THE BUSH GANG:
Fat Cats and Right-Wing Hacks

By Alan Maass
***Socialist Worker,** January 19, 2001*

Dick Cheney
Vice President

THE REPUBLICANS' slate for the White House in Election 2000 was known as the Wizard of Oz ticket. George W. Bush needed a brain. And Vice President Dick Cheney needed a heart—in more ways than one.

The man who seems to be pulling the strings in the Bush White House has one of the most right-wing records in Washington.

Cheney got his start in the Nixon White House in the late 1960s and rose quickly through the ranks—by firmly attaching himself to the coattails of his mentor, Donald Rumsfeld, who showed up as defense secretary in a Cabinet filled with Cheney's cronies.

In 1978, Cheney got elected to the House of Representatives from Wyoming. There, he compiled a right-wing voting record that vies with the likes of Jesse Helms and Newt Gingrich.

Of 27 votes on legislation concerning reproductive rights, Cheney took the anti-choice side 26 times—including one vote for legislation that banned abortions even in cases of rape or incest. He was one of only eight members of Congress to oppose reauthorizing the Clean Water Act and one of only 33 to vote against funding the Head Start education program.

In 1985, he voted against a House resolution calling on the butchers of apartheid South Africa to release Nelson Mandela after 23 years of imprisonment—a decision Cheney recently defended. Cheney voted against sanctions against the apartheid regime in various forms at least 10 times between 1983 and 1988.

In 1989, Dubya's father picked Cheney to take over the Pentagon. He helped Papa Bush run the Gulf War slaughter against Iraq—pressing for the air war and then a ground offensive against all objections.

When Bush lost the 1992 election by a landslide, Cheney followed Papa Bush into the world of big oil. In 1995, he became CEO of Halliburton, the world's largest oil services company—which got that way in part by making a killing with contracts to clean up Kuwait after Cheney's Gulf War.

Halliburton's other business is as a construction subcontractor for the Pentagon. Between 1996 and 1999, the company won $1.8 billion worth of Pentagon contracts for building military bases and other facilities for U.S. forces in Haiti, Bosnia and the Balkans. Cheney used his international contacts to drum up business, too. For example, he signed a deal with the military dictators of Burma to build a gas pipeline.

Cheney was handsomely rewarded for his "expertise." He made $39 million in salary and stock options for five years of work—including a $13.6 million "retirement" package when he quit to work for Bush, which sparked such a controversy that Cheney was forced to give up part of it.

Cheney stepped in to Dubya's vice presidential selection process—and arrived at the conclusion that he was by far the most qualified candidate. The mainstream media concentrated on how Cheney made the Republican ticket seem more respectable and grown up. But the truth is he's a right-wing kook.

John Ashcroft
Attorney General

IT'S HARD to think of anyone in Washington with a more right-wing record than John Ashcroft.

Ashcroft thinks all abortions should be banned—without exception. He was one of three cosponsors of the Human Life Amendment, which would not only outlaw abortions but some forms of contraception.

The man who Bush wants to head the federal government's enormous law enforcement apparatus doesn't think much of civil rights—especially for African Americans. Reviewing his record as a senator and governor and attorney general of Missouri, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* wrote in a recent editorial: "Mr. Ashcroft has built a career out of opposing school desegregation in St. Louis and opposing African Americans for public office."

Ashcroft led the fight to derail Bill Clinton's appointment of Ronnie White, the first African American to serve on the Missouri Supreme Court, as a federal judge. White's appointment was supported by Missouri's police organization. But that didn't stop Ashcroft from claiming that White's record showed "a tremendous bent toward criminal activity."

Ashcroft hasn't done much to hide his racism. In 1999, he gave an interview to the far-right *Southern Partisan* magazine where he talked about his admiration for Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

"We've all got to stand up and [defend them]," Ashcroft said, "or else we'll be taught that these people were giving their lives, subscribing their sacred fortunes and their honor to some perverted agenda."

Last year, Ashcroft was handed an honorary degree from Bob Jones University, the South Carolina college for racists and the religious right. Ashcroft not only showed up in person, but he gave the commencement address.

When it comes to law enforcement issues, Ashcroft is second to none in talking touch about crime. For example, the problem with the drug war, he says, is that the U.S. hasn't been fighting hard enough.

A government that "assures citizens that, if you're involved in drugs, we'll be there to catch you with a treatment center and also implements a clean needle program, is a government that accomodates us at our lowest and least," Ashcroft said in a Senate speech.

Of course, there are exceptions. When Ashcroft's nephew was caught in a major bust of marijuana growers, he faced a mandatory jail sentence under a federal prosecution. Instead, he got probation on a state charge.

Colin Powell
Secretary of State

COLIN POWELL is known to Democrats and Republicans alike as a hero of the U.S.'s Gulf War against Iraq. And in an ethically challenged administration, he's considered a rock of integrity and principle.

What a crock!

Powell engineered a one-sided slaughter in Iraq. And he's a veteran Washington in-fighter—"the most politically [skillful] general the United States has seen since Dwight D. Eisenhower," as one commentator put it.

During the Vietnam War, Powell was sent in to help cover up the My Lai massacre. He spent most of his time in Washington as an obscure military bureaucrat—until the right-wing crackpots who

ran Ronald Reagan's basement White House plucked him from obscurity.

Papa Bush himself tapped Powell to be chair of the joint chiefs of staff. As head of the armed forces during the Gulf War, he spelled out the U.S.'s strategy against Iraq's poorly equipped and trained army: "First, we're going to cut it off; then, we're going to kill it." The U.S. allies killed an estimated 200,000 Iraqis during its saturation bombing campaign—and a blitzkrieg ground offensive in which surrendering Iraqi soldiers were slaughtered by the thousands.

For this, Powell became a media darling—and a constant source of speculation about his political ambitions.

Donald Rumsfeld

Defense Secretary

DONALD RUMSFELD and the military-industrial complex go way back.

He became defense secretary in 1975 under President Gerald Ford—who picked him to head the Pentagon as a concession to the Republican right, which was throwing its support to Ronald Reagan's 1976 bid to unseat Ford for the GOP presidential nomination.

Taking over the Pentagon in the aftermath of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam and Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal, Rumsfeld led the way in pulling the demoralized military establishment back together again.

He agitated for a tough line against the former USSR—engineering the collapse of negotiations for the SALT II arms control treaty. And he resuscitated the scandal-plagued Pentagon gravy trade, winning support for new weapons deals, including the B-1 bomber program, one of the most expensive boondoggles in Pentagon history.

After being driven out of Washington, Rumsfeld became a high-paid corporate executive. But he kept his military connections as a trustee of the Rand Corporation, the Pentagon's think tank.

As head of a commission to study the proposed Star Wars missile defense scam, Rumsfeld defied the estimates of military experts inside and outside the Pentagon and discovered that the U.S. desperately needed a Star Wars system to defend itself from attack by...North Korea.

Paul O'Neill

Treasury Secretary

IF PAUL O'Neill feels out of place at Cabinet meetings, it won't be a surprise. In an administration filled with Texas oilmen, he's probably the only one who can say he appeared at Bill Clinton's 1992 economic summit to push for a gas tax hike to balance the budget.

But O'Neill is no bleeding heart. He spent the last decade running the aluminum giant Alcoa, which he made lean and mean by slashing 10,000 jobs.

As a former bureaucrat in the Nixon White House, O'Neill made his name as an expert on health care—after he authored a report claiming that U.S. hospitals were "oversupplied" with beds. Even before managed care became all the rage, O'Neill was known as a tireless advocate of higher insurance deductibles and copayments—as a way of discouraging "unnecessary" costs.

Tommy Thompson

Health and Human Services Secretary

TOMMY THOMPSON is poised to take over the bureaucracy he's spent the 14 years denouncing as "Disneyland East."

As governor of Wisconsin, Thompson made a name for himself by attacking federal programs for the poor—and coming up with various "reform" schemes. He started out with restrictions that withheld welfare benefits from parents whose children missed school—and then from recipients who had more children while on welfare. Then he went for the home run—strict lifetime limits on how long people could receive welfare.

The result: The number of families on welfare dropped from 98,000 to less than 7,000. The 1990s economic expansion partially hid the impact of welfare reform by absorbing former recipients into low-wage jobs. Yet social service agencies in Milwaukee say the demand for emergency shelter and food aid has shot through the roof.

Thompson's attacks on the most vulnerable didn't stop with welfare. The man who wants to oversee Title X—the country's oldest family-planning program—signed a law in Wisconsin that barred state, local or federal funding for any family-planning program with connections to abortion providers. He also approved anti-abortion laws requiring parental consent for minors, a mandatory 24-hour waiting period and required counseling on "alternatives" to abortion.

As health and human services secretary, Thompson would oversee the government's Medicaid insurance program for the poor—the very program that he wants to convert to a system of block grants to the states.

Gale Norton

Interior Secretary

AND YOU can kiss those national parks goodbye. That was the message Bush was sending when he nominated Gale Norton as interior secretary.

Norton is a protégé of anti-environment kook James Watt, Ronald Reagan's mad-dog interior secretary who opposed conservation of natural resources because "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns," he said.

She got her first job out of law school at Watt's Mountain States Legal Foundation, an organization formed with money from the Coors family to promote right-wing causes in the courts—especially the "wise use" movement's drive to open up public lands to mining, logging and oil and gas exploration. When Watt joined the Reagan administration, Norton followed him—making her mark at the Interior Department with a report recommending oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In 1990, Norton was elected attorney general of Colorado—where she supported proposals allowing corporations to police themselves on pollution laws. She also led the battle to defend Amendment 2, an anti-gay referendum overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1996.

In 1998, Norton hit the national stage as founder of the Council of Republicans for Environmental Advocacy. The group's gala inaugural meeting in Washington was sponsored by the National Coal Council, the Chemical Manufacturers Association, the National Mining Association and the Chlorine Chemical Council.

Norton makes another admirer of the Confederacy in Bush's proposed Cabinet. In a 1996 speech to a conservative group, she declared that "we lost too much" when the South was defeated in the Civil War. Slavery, she said, was one of those "bad facts" that can undermine an otherwise strong case.

Christine Todd Whitman

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator

WHEN SHE was sworn in as governor in 1993, Christine Todd Whitman declared that New Jersey was "open for business."

It sure was.

The woman who will lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under Dubya cut New Jersey's budget for environmental protection by 30 percent. Fines for air and water polluters dropped by almost three-quarters.

Yet Whitman is being played up as a Republican environmentalist—because her courageous opposition to dumping garbage in the Atlantic Ocean.

In fact, Whitman has been an insistent complainer about the terrible burdens heaped on defenseless multinational cor-

porations by the EPA. At her confirmation hearings, she said openly that she thinks it's a good idea to devolve power for regulating pollution to state and local governments.

Whitman's opinions about the environment aren't far off from "Colorado crazy" Gale Norton. But you'd never know it from the mainstream media, which insists on calling her a Republican moderate. There's nothing in her record to warrant this label—except for the fact that she's pro-choice. But that was enough to earn her the hatred of the Christian Right.

Whitman, who had been a rising star of the party, was elbowed aside. But if she runs the EPA like she did New Jersey, she'll make the GOP's big business backers very happy.

Elaine Chao

Labor Secretary

GEORGE W. BUSH has picked a Cabinet that only a CEO could love. But Linda Chavez, his first nominee for labor secretary, was above and beyond the call.

Her nomination was effectively a declaration of war on organized labor. But there was a hitch in the battle plan.

Chavez's nomination collapsed in a smoking heap after revelations that an undocumented worker from Guatemala had lived in Chavez's home and done chores, apparently in exchange for cash. According to media reports, Chavez hid the matter from the Bush gang—which promptly cut her loose when it hit the front pages.

Whatever the case, the scandal certainly proves that Chavez is a hypocrite. When the same charge was leveled at Zoe Baird, Bill Clinton's first nominee for attorney general in 1993, Chavez helped to lead the right-wing attack.

Unfortunately, Democrats—and more than a few liberal organizations—adopted this same anti-immigrant attitude toward Chavez. There were plenty of good reasons to fight Chavez's nomination—as a conservative mouthpiece for hire, she lent her name to an incredible array of right-wing causes. Focusing on these real issues would have been an excellent first step in telling Dubya that he isn't going to get away with turning back the clock.

Once Chavez withdrew her name, the Bush team was quick to nominate Elaine Chao for labor secretary, and union leaders responded enthusiastically. But it's hard to see what they're so happy about.

Chao may not be a mad dog, but she's part of Washington's conservative establishment.

Her last job was as a fellow at the Heritage Foundation, the granddaddy of right-wing think tanks. She's an ardent opponent of affirmative action as Chavez. And the new head of the Labor Department is most familiar with the inside of a corporate boardroom—sitting on the boards of Clorox, Dole Food and Northwest Airlines, which distinguished itself last year by stonewalling unions in negotiations for new contracts.

Rod Paige

Education Secretary

ROD PAIGE is probably more important for who he isn't—the high-profile Democrat that the Bush team hoped to coax into the Cabinet. A Democrat as education secretary would have polished Dubya's fake image as a bipartisan "uniter" and provided someone to walk point on the issue of school vouchers when the administration pushed education "reform." But none of the likely suspects went for the bait, so Bush had to make do with Paige.

Paige ran the public school system in Houston. he's mostly identified with school "accountability"—as measured by standardized tests taken annually by public school kids.

Both Bush and Paige built their education credentials on rising scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. But there's another side to the statistics. First, while TAAS scores rose during Bush's reign in Texas, no other measure of student performance matched the gains. The explanation, say education experts, is that Texas schools haven't improved so much as teachers tailored classes to drilling students on how to pass the test.

Then there are the scams that administrators use to keep up test scores. While Paige was superintendent, Houston schools were rocked by a scandal involving officials expanding the size of special education classes, where students are exempted from testing. And Paige was accused of fiddling with the numbers to get an exaggerated graduation rate.

The threat to abortion rights

GEORGE W. BUSH did everything he could to avoid the issue of abortion rights during the presidential campaign. He distanced himself from the Christian right and refused to talk about whether he would appoint anti-abortion justices to the Supreme Court.

But that was then, and this is now.

Dubya's new administration is filled with anti-abortion fanatics. Attorney General John Ashcroft. As a senator, he opposed legislation requiring federal employees' health plans to cover the cost of prescription contraceptives—because certain birth control methods "act de facto as abortifacients," he explained in a letter he co-authored.

Tommy Thompson, the former Wisconsin governor who Bush tapped as health and human services secretary, once signed an anti-abortion law so vaguely worded that every abortion provider in the state closed its doors for fear of being sent to jail—until a court overturned the law.

Meanwhile, congressional leaders are certain to reintroduce federal legislation to ban a late-term procedure misnamed "partial birth" abortion by the anti-abortionists. Though it was vetoed each time, the proposal passed Congress three times in the last few years—with the support of numerous Democrats, including Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) and House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.).

Once in office, Bush lost no time attacking abortion rights. He ordered the Food and Drug Administration to review the abortion-inducing drug RU-486, and he signed an executive order to halt U.S. funding to international organizations that provide abortion counseling.

No wonder the anti-abortionists are celebrating.

But we can wipe that smile off their faces. Mass mobilizations of pro-abortion activists while Dubya's father was president stopped the right wing's attempt to overturn legal abortion. We can stop the anti-abortionists' attack on the right to choose.

BEAT BACK BUSH

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

International Socialist Review, February-March, 2001

NOT EVERYONE who went to George W. Bush's inauguration on January 20 was there to welcome him. Some 20,000 to 30,000 people came to Washington, D.C., to take part in several protests organized that day. Thousands also protested in other cities across the country.

The main themes of the protest—the selection rather than election of Bush, the decisive role of money rather than popular sentiment in elections and the rejection of a return to Reaganism—are themes that are not likely to fade away. While Congressional Democrats have climbed over themselves to offer Bush an olive branch, the anger at the bottom is already palpable.

Whatever conciliatory rhetoric he may have used before the inauguration, Bush has made it clear since then that he is going to try to push through a number of right-wing initiatives.

He began his first day in office by banning funding to overseas family planning organizations that mention the word "abortion." Bush then ordered the Food and Drug Administration to review its approval of the abortion-inducing drug RU-486, with an eye toward finding an excuse to remove it from the market. Vice President Dick Cheney told NBC's "Meet the Press" that the new administration looks forward to finding "ways to reduce the incidence of abortion"—starting with pushing through a ban on late-term abortions.

"We share a great goal," Bush told a group of anti-abortion protesters the Monday after his inauguration, "to work toward a day when every child is welcomed in life and protected by law." He has also announced that he may instruct his Justice Department to explore the possibility of overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

Bush has also launched a number of other initiatives. His "school reform" plan pushes school vouchers and standardized testing. This is really a plan for privatization. It punishes public schools that are failing due to lack of resources by paying parents to put their kids in private schools—leaving the poorest children to rot in crumbling public education. He unveiled a "faith-based" plan to give money to religious organizations to provide social services.

The new administration intends to open the Alaskan Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. Bush's recent comments on the California energy crisis, in which he blamed pollution controls for energy shortages, indicates his willingness to use anything to promote more deregulation on behalf of his wealthy backers.

At the top of the president's list is the $1.6 trillion tax cut that will benefit the richest Americans. Bush has used the deepening economic slowdown—and Fed Chair Alan Greenspan's thumbs up—to gather support for his handout to the rich.

Finally, Bush's record on the death penalty in Texas tells us that he is unlikely to let up on executions or the "tough-on-crime" trend on Capitol Hill.

Bush's goals are reflected in his Cabinet appointments. They are partly a gift to the right (John Ashcroft, Tommy Thompson); partly a gift to weapons producers (Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell); partly a gift to extracting industries that want to pollute more (Gale Norton, Christie Whitman); and generally a gift to major corporations, especially oil (Dick Cheney, Don Evans, Paul O'Neill).

A *Barron's* article written before the inauguration pointed out that Bush had already "presented the business community with the keys to the city." Bush's transition teams were packed with representatives from big business. Gale Norton's Department of the Interior, for example, was "jammed with representatives of energy, mining and paper companies." The chair of Enron, the energy and commodity company, sat on the team advising Energy Secretary nominee Spencer Abraham.

Bush's defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, is pressing ahead with the Star Wars missile-defense system—despite criticism from Russia, China and even Europe. This never-successfully-tested system is meant to protect the U.S. from ballistic missile attacks from "rogue" states such as North Korea, but it is clearly targeting China and Russia. Rumsfeld has indicated that the U.S. is perfectly willing to scrap the existing Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia in order to pursue U.S. military aims.

The Star Wars plan is going to stoke a new arms race, as the U.S. spends billions more dollars on top of an already bloated military budget, encouraging Russia and Europe to follow suit.

Secretary of State Colin Powell has already announced his intention of reinvigorating sanctions against Iraq, which could be a prelude to more military action. Whatever unfolds, it is clear that there is going to be an increase in international tensions, exacerbated by the economic downturn, between the U.S., Europe and Russia.

It should be kept in mind, however, that these developments do not represent a sharp break from past practice. Clinton gave support to a more limited Star Wars system, and Gore's running mate, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), recently told a meeting of top European officials and defense specialists that there was consensus in Washington for some kind of missile-defense system. The difference is one of degree, not substance.

Tepid Democrats

The response of House and Senate Democrats to Bush's rightward lurch has been more or less to cave in under the guise of "bipartisanship." While many ordinary voters are enraged over the election, "the fury can be hard to detect in Washington," wrote the *New York Times*.

This isn't surprising. Before the inauguration, Gore's concession speech called on Americans to accept Bush in the name of a strong, united America. Leading Democrats feared an ongoing constitutional crisis that might throw the legitimacy of the entire political system into question more than accepting a stolen election.

The press has followed in lockstep. A *New York Times* editorial written the day after the inauguration proclaimed that Bush could "lift the nation to a new era of inclusion and social justice."

The result is that, aside from some saber-rattling around the appointment of arch-right-winger John Ashcroft for attorney general—a man who admires the old Confederacy and defied a federal voluntary school desegregation order while he held the same job in Missouri—Bush's Cabinet appointments have sailed through without a hitch. Gale Norton, the hard anti-environmentalist who is now secre-

tary of the interior, was confirmed with only half of the Democrats voting against.

Russ Feingold, a backer of campaign finance reform and a national moratorium on the death penalty, cast the deciding vote in committee that brought Ashcroft's confirmation to a Senate vote. Ashcroft was guaranteed to win confirmation as a result of the defection of eight Democrats to his side. Sen. Edward Kennedy, after threatening a possible filibuster against Ashcroft's nomination, backed off in the end.

The claim that the opposition to Ashcroft—without trying to scuttle his nomination—was meant to be a "shot over the bow" rings hollow. It comes across more as a toothless threat made in order to appease the millions of Democratic Party supporters who are livid over the stolen election and want to see something done.

The behavior of the Democrats shows the effect that years of adopting "Republican Lite" policies has had on the Democratic Party. Under the domination of the Democratic Leadership Council, Clinton's presidency shifted the political goalposts further and further to the right. After all, Joe Lieberman was also in favor of "school choice." Gore pandered to the right during his campaign, emphasizing his willingness to sign a ban on late-term abortions. Clinton used liberal rhetoric to implement anti-crime measures and the gutting of welfare—things even Reagan wasn't able to get away with.

Not the 1980s

The rightward drift of the Democrats has helped to create the environment in Washington that makes Bush think he can bring back Reaganism.

But this is not going to be a repeat of the 1980s—for a number of reasons. For one, Bush does not have even the slender mandate Reagan had in 1980. It should not be forgotten that he lost the popular vote in this election and gained the presidency only by stealing it through voter fraud in Florida. Bush was helped by five Supreme Court Justices who prevented a Florida recount on the grounds that the country had suddenly run out of time for an accurate count. There are literally millions of people, especially Black Americans, who do not believe that Bush gained the presidency legitimately.

Secondly, consciousness among workers is to the left of official politics and has been for quite some time. This is reflected not only in the fact that the combined votes of Gore and Ralph Nader exceeded Bush's vote by millions. It is shown by the fact, that according to a *Business Week* poll last summer, almost three-quarters of the population think corporations have too much power. It is also reflected in polls showing that 67 percent of the population support *Roe v. Wade*. And in spite of the gushing bipartisanship at the top over Bush's education plan, opinion polls have shown that a majority of people oppose school vouchers. Seventy percent of voters overturned a voucher initiative in California last November.

Thirdly, the economy is not what it was in the 1980s or 1990s. The promise of "trickle-down economics" has been exposed for what it is: a massive redistribution of wealth from those at the bottom to a tiny handful at the top.

The mainstream organizations that could bring together widespread opposition may be upset at Bush's win, but their response has been muted. The National Organization for Women (NOW) called a demonstration at the inauguration, but they did not organize for it. Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO, Rev. Jesse Jackson and the NAACP mobilized for an anti-inauguration protest—not in Washington, D.C., but in Tallahassee, Fla.

Clearly, well-built demonstrations for civil rights, workers' rights and abortion rights could bring out hundreds of thousands of people. There is going to have to be mobilization in order to resist Bush's aggressive and overconfident offensive.

But organizations like NOW are more used to lobbying than fighting—to little effect. They've spent their time over the past several years backing Clinton, politically and financially, as he moved rightward. Instead of resisting the steady erosion of abortion, state by state, NOW remained a passive tail of the Clinton White House.

The muffled opposition of the Democrats is masking the depths of anger and opposition at the bottom. What is remarkable is that, in spite of this, the immediate response against Bush has been strong.

Most people found their own way to the Inauguration Day protests individually and in small groups, from campuses, communities and workplaces. The protests involved angry working-class Blacks who feel their votes were once again stolen, as well as student veterans of the Nader campaign and thousands of people radicalized by the anti-globalization movement.

The deregulation crisis in California raises severe doubts about the wonders of the free market at the very moment that Bush appears poised to go on a deregulation binge—starting possibly with plans to at least partially privatize Social Security and to introduce a voucher system to replace Medicare spending. This attack will come in the face of overwhelming evidence that HMOs are abandoning Medicare patients.

A precise reading of the future isn't possible. But there is clearly already an active opposition to Bush—and there is every reason to think that this opposition will grow. Every effort should be made to assist, accelerate and deepen the mood of resistance that exists widely and to help turn it from a mood to a movement, from individual opposition to organized action.

Bush clearly thinks that if he hits hard from day one, he can disarm and roll over the Democrats. That may be true, but in doing so, he may well stir a much bigger force into active opposition to his administration.

Combined with the effects of the coming economic downturn and the blow this has delivered to the ideology of the free market, the next few years will not be a return to Reaganism and a "one-sided class war" but may well prove a two-sided class war. The high point of the "idiot son's" presidency may well end up being his coronation on January 20.

BEAT BACK BUSH

Interview with Howard Zinn: "THE SIGNS OF RESISTANCE"

Howard Zinn *is one of the best known activists in the U.S. today. He's a veteran of the labor and civil rights movements and has been an opponent of U.S. military adventures overseas for more than half a century. He's the author of numerous books and articles, including* ***A People's History of the United States*** *and the play* ***Marx in Soho.*** *Howard talked to Anthony Arnove about the fraud of Election 2000, the fight against George W. Bush and the struggle for a socialist future.*

■

Did the schemes to prevent voting by African Americans in this election remind you of your experiences fighting for voting rights during the civil rights movement?

ON THE face of things, the situation is supposed to be very different.

Before the huge demonstrations all over the South that led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Black people in the South—especially in the deep South—simply weren't voting. They were afraid to vote. They were afraid to register to vote. If they tried to register to vote, they were beaten, their lives were threatened, and they would lose their jobs.

So, even though they were 30 to 40 percent of the population in the deep South, they were 0 to 5 percent of the voting population. There was blatant disregard of the 15th Amendment by the federal government, which just looked the other way while all this was happening. The voting rights movement was fighting essentially to get the federal government to enforce the 15th Amendment.

In 1965, Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act—spurred on by the years of mass demonstrations and mass arrests and the bloody events in Selma, Alabama.

It looks like a whole different ballgame. Black people in Florida voted in this last election—and so, superficially, the situation seems to have changed dramatically.

But the reality is that a more subtle tactic to prevent Blacks from voting has come into being, and this is what we saw in Florida—where the poor districts where Black people live get defective voting machines, where the registration of Blacks in these districts is very disorganized and where people can't get registered to vote as a result of the disenfranchisement of large numbers of Blacks who either aren't allowed to register or whose votes aren't counted.

And so, while superficially they have a right to vote, the reality is that large numbers of Blacks are being disenfranchised. That's what happened in Florida, and in this case, it was crucial in Bush winning the vote in Florida—and therefore Florida's electoral vote.

This is a very common situation in our society: People struggled to get their legal rights, they achieved their legal rights on paper, then the reality of power and wealth comes into play, and those legal rights don't mean very much in the crunch.

I suppose the lesson of that is never depend on your legal rights—never think you can point to a legal statute or the Constitution and say, "Look! This is what it says and this is therefore what I'm going to have." Because whatever the Constitution says and whatever the statutes say, whoever holds the power in any given situation is going to determine whether the rights you have on paper are rights you have in fact.

What happened the last time the loser of the popular vote for president snuck into the White House because of the Electoral College?

IT WAS interesting to me that during this period of Al Gore and George Bush's dispute over the votes in Florida, the media was full of historic references to the Rutherford B. Hayes-Samuel Tilden election of 1876 and the "compromise" of 1877. They had very pretentious references to the election to show that they know history and that they could recall various disputed elections.

What the media didn't talk about when they discussed the superficial facts about the Hayes-Tilden election was that Hayes becoming president represented a deal between Democrats and Republicans—and was the beginning of a long period of bipartisanship, you might say.

The Republican Hayes lost the popular vote to Tilden and needed one more Electoral College vote. But in a special commission, the Democrats gave every disputed electoral vote in four states to Hayes, so he could win.

In return for the electoral victory handed to them under dubious circumstances, the Hayes administration agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South—troops that had been enforcing the 14th and 15th Amendments and permitting Blacks to vote. These troops were withdrawn from enforcing Reconstruction and were then used to break the 1877 railroad strikes—and also to go West to take over Indian lands.

In short, the Republicans, who represented the industrial interests of the North, made a rapprochement with the Democrats and the white South—at the expense of the newly freed slaves, at the expense of working people and at the expense of indigenous people.

Despite the hullabaloo over who wins the election—then, as now—ultimately, the two parties worked it out among themselves at the expense of everyone else.

What did you think when you heard that the U.S. Supreme Court was handing the White House to George W. Bush by stopping the recount of the vote in Florida?

IT'S SO ironic that those five justices who haven't given a damn about the equal protection clause up to this point—who have resisted using the equal protection clause for Black people, for women, for poor people—suddenly were invoking the equal protection clause to make sure that the votes weren't counted in Florida. That's how Bush became president.

It is a kind of flagrant violation of the notion of free elections. If this took place in a Third World country, we would have looked at with horror and said, "Look at those people. They don't know how to have free and democratic elections like we do!"

We're always pointing to other countries and using this as a test of democracy: Do they have free elections or not? Using this as a test of our own democracy, it means we aren't a democratic country—because we didn't have free elections.

How important is who's sitting in the White House to what happens in the next four years?

THERE'S HARDLY anything more important that people can learn than the fact that the really critical thing isn't who

is sitting in the White House, but who is *sitting in*—sitting in in the streets, in the cafeterias, in the halls of government, in the factories. Who is protesting, who is occupying offices and demonstrating—those are the things that determine what happens.

After all, the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, which overthrew the "separate but equal doctrine" of segregated schools, came during the Eisenhower administration. It came with a Republican appointee as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court—came with Republicans joining Democrats on the Supreme Court.

And why did that happen? Was there a sudden burst of enlightenment that hit the brains of the members of the Supreme Court and suddenly told them: "Oh my God, we've misinterpreted the 14th Amendment?" The only reason that happened in 1954 is that the world around the Supreme Court had changed.

In 1954, even though the civil rights movement hadn't begun in earnest—it was in the next year that we had the Montgomery bus boycott and several years later that we had the sit-ins that were the heart of the movement—there were already rumblings of discontent in the South. Five different cases came up before the Supreme Court challenging segregation—*Brown v. Board of Education* was only one of the five cases. In those five different areas, Blacks had challenged segregation.

Black people were challenging segregation in many different places in the South and were risking their lives to do so. A Black man in Camden County, S.C., who challenged segregation in the early 1950s was run out of town. His church was burned, and he was declared a fugitive from justice.

People went through hell, and these things were happening throughout the country. So those cases wouldn't have come up before the Supreme Court if there hadn't been those acts of resistance.

At the same time, the United States was involved in the Cold War with the Soviet Union—this contest for influence in the Third World, which is a non-white world. By 1954, it was very important for the United States to demonstrate in some way to these Third World countries that it was doing something about racial segregation. And indeed when the United States argued before the Supreme Court in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, the United States attorneys arguing the case said the court should consider what was happening in the rest of the world and how the United States looked.

In other words, there are all these pressures—internal and external—that operate on the Supreme Court and on the government. It isn't simply a matter of the judges closing themselves in from the world, sitting in their chambers and reading the words of the Constitution over and over again until something becomes clear to them.

Their minds are much clarified by the things that are swirling around them in the world.

At the protests in Washington, D.C., against Bush's inauguration, there was a real feeling of resistance and optimism. Do you sense that?

I THINK whether you're optimistic or pessimistic depends on what you're looking at.

We live in a very complex society, where thousands and thousands of images come your way from television and the media. All the things that appear in the newspapers and most of the images that you see are images of "important" people. What you hear mostly in the newspapers is what the president is saying, what the Secretary of State said yesterday, or the Secretary of Defense, and so on and so forth.

If you compare how much attention is paid to what government officials do compared to what ordinary people do, it's an enormous gap. So if you take seriously these images on television, and what you read in the newspapers, and take that as representative of our society, that's very disheartening. Because what you're hearing are things that really confirm the status quo. You're not hearing signs of resistance to it.

But there are thousands of things that are going on all the time that aren't reported in the mainstream press and that aren't reported on the major media. There's evidence of an enormous amount of energy in towns and cities all over the country—energy of people who are doing things that are noble and helpful to other people. There are thousands of organizations in this country working on issues like racial equality, women's rights, environmental protection, anti-militarism. But the work they do doesn't get onto television.

On Inauguration Day in Washington, there was an enormous amount of attention given to every word the president uttered, every image of everybody who was in the inauguration party. But there was just a flash on the demonstrators, although there were thousands and maybe tens of thousands of them.

I did read down in the lower reaches of a column in one of the newspapers that along the parade where the president's limousine was making its way, demonstrators outnumbered the Bush supporters. Now that's an interesting fact—but you would never know that from looking at the television or reading all the headlines in the major news stories.

The reason people felt some sense of optimism in Washington was because they were in the midst of people who were carrying signs against war and against stolen elections. They were in the midst of people with spirit and originality—not simply listening to the tired clichés of the president's Inaugural address.

What also makes me optimistic is that every day I get in the mail a dozen different pieces of information about good things that are happening around the country that organizations are doing. Some guy in Athens, Ga., who writes a radical column for the local establishment newspaper will send me copies of his columns. There are voices like this all over the country.

And of course, there are books, there's a counterculture, there are community newspapers, there are an amazing number of alternative newspapers all over the country, in all the major cities.

So if you're aware of that—if you pay attention to that and don't allow yourself to be overwhelmed by the images of the great and near-great in Washington, D.C.—you can get a sense of an enormous potential for change in this country.

There especially seems to be a new shift in public sentiment against the death penalty.

I'VE SEEN it myself, just talking to people. I also know the public opinion polls show that there's been a change in public opinion. More and more people oppose the death penalty.

There's a cause for optimism in the idea that if people persistently tell the truth, say what's going on and make the arguments—even though it's very hard to get the truth through all of the obstacles placed in the way by the control of the major media—the lies will erode. Ideas will penetrate the national consciousness, and opinions will change. I think that's what's happened with the death penalty.

Nothing has really come from the top. But there's been more and more attention paid to the death penalty—and more activity, more action, more local organizations working on it, more discussion and argument.

I remember going not long ago to a meeting in Connecticut on the death penalty, and on the platform with me was a man whose daughter had been murdered—but who had come out against the

death penalty. There are more and more people like him—who themselves have been victimized in some way or whose family members have been killed, but who insist that the death penalty is not the proper answer.

I think there's definitely a change. We have a long way to go to move public opinion all the way around, but we've seen that happen. I think it's the kind of common decency that comes to the fore after a while, even though it can be buried under the weight of political rhetoric.

We saw it happen with the Vietnam War. The more people learned what was going on—despite all the attempts of the government to prevent them from finding out—the more public opinion turned around. I'm hopeful that will happen with the death penalty.

What do you think the prospects are for class politics and socialist politics to reach a wider audience now?

I THINK the opportunity to discuss socialism is here in a very important way. This morning, I met with three faculty members of Suffolk University in Boston. They run a program for several hundred students, all of whom have been given the *Communist Manifesto* to read. It's kind of an interdisciplinary program of literature and social sciences, and a number of them have also been given the requirement to read my play *Marx in Soho*. They also invited me to come and give a talk there next month and to answer the question: Is Marxism dead?

I think the fall of the Soviet Union 10 years ago has given us a much better opportunity to talk about socialism in a way that isn't tainted by visions of Stalinism—by a police state and the gulag. We can return to that refreshing vision of socialism that was given to us before the Soviet Union came along—by people in this country like Eugene Debs, Helen Keller and Jack London.

It's a vision of socialism that can inspire people—that inspired several million people in this country at the turn of the century. I think we have opportunities to do that.

It will take a lot of education, but it's clear that people don't have faith in government institutions. I was just reading something that appeared in the *Financial Times*, which is not exactly a proletarian newspaper. The *Financial Times* did an international survey, and people in this survey indicated they had very little faith in government and a lot more faith in nongovernmental organizations.

This skepticism of the governments around the world shows the amount of alienation that exists—and therefore the amount of opportunities that exist to present new ideas to people.

How to join the fight

The INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION is involved in the struggle for justice and democracy across the country. To get involved where you live, call these numbers:

Amherst, Mass. 413-256-3335	**Cincinnati** 859-491-8650	**Philadelphia** 215-925-7910	**San Diego** 619-293-3619
Atlanta 770-541-6914	**Iowa City, Iowa** 319-339-8485	**Pittsburgh** 412-687-1855	**San Juan, P.R.** 787-753-7673
Austin, Texas 512-494-0667	**Los Angeles** 213-380-3929	**Providence, R.I.** 401-726-7339	**Seattle** 206-292-8809
Boston 781-551-6649	**Madison, Wis.** 608-245-0292	**Rochester, N.Y.** 716-436-3886	**Washington, D.C.** 202-777-2643
Burlington, Vt. 802-865-6830	**New Haven, Conn.** 203-874-7573	**San Francisco Bay Area** 510-594-4081	**Winston-Salem, N.C.** 336-725-2706
Chicago 312-409-1105	**New York City** 212-502-0707		

For more information, call us at 773-665-7337. Or visit our Web site at www.internationalsocialist.org.

Your introduction to socialism

Get an introductory package of socialist reading material! For $10, we'll send you:

- Alan Maass' book *Why You Should Be a Socialist*
- A five-issue trial subscription to *Socialist Worker*, newspaper of the ISO
- The latest issue of the ISO's bimonthly journal *International Socialist Review*

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone ( ) _____

Send a check to: *Socialist Worker*, P.O. Box 16085, Chicago, IL 60616.

BBB